

A LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER



Volunteering and committing acts of charity are part of both the American and Indian cultures. There are many incentives—religious, cultural, personal—for donating time, expertise, money or energy to right a wrong, help someone less fortunate and benefit the community in which we live. In this issue of SPAN we are celebrating that spirit of giving of oneself. We're also offering ideas about how to encourage more people, especially the young, to engage in volunteer activities. The reasons can range from a sense of idealism, a chance for an adventure or an opportunity to gain experience for a future career.

Some universities and schools in the United States are recognizing that it is important to society to instill the value of volunteerism among their graduates, and these schools are making community service a part of coursework. Creative programs that combine volunteer work with job training or a minimum-wage stipend can combat the problems of unemployment by giving young people in underprivileged areas a sense of accomplishment and an experience of having a positive effect on their world.

There are estimates that 60 percent of the American population periodically engages in volunteer work.

Historians trace this habit to the necessity of communities working together as people moved West across the American continent, setting up new towns and settlements. Cowboys were a part of that history of the West. Working together, helping each other, is still a necessity for their way of life, as Daniel Miller, a USAID officer in New Delhi and a former cowboy, explains in the words and pictures of our cover story.

We hope you enjoy these and other articles in SPAN and that they spur you to some new ideas that you will share with us. In this first issue of the year 2007, we have begun a new reader-requested feature, Letters to the Editor, which will also appear on the SPAN Web site.

Happy New Year!

Larry Schwartz

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Front cover: A cowboy in Montana. Photograph by Daniel Miller.

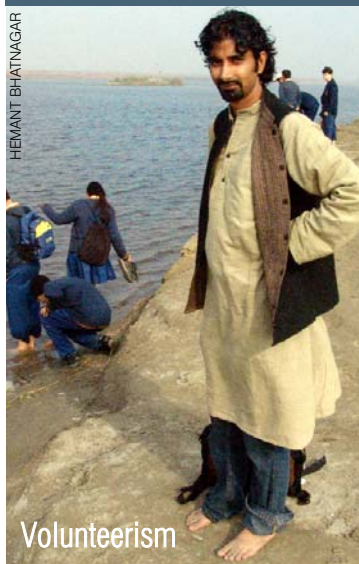
Correction: In "Building Homes and Memories Together" (November/December 2006), SPAN misquoted Dr. Madhavi Pethe as saying her father was a gardener. He was a superintendent of gardening.

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